

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION



GREGGIANFORTE, GOVERNOR

1539 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE: (406) 444-2074
FAX: (406) 444-2684PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

DECISION MEMO ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE

AIS Data Centralization and Exchange to Support Educational Outreach, Early Detection,
Prevention, and Planning and Permitting Processes

January 26, 2022

Montana Natural Heritage Program

Administrative Actions

Statewide

Lewis & Clark County

PURPOSE AND NEED

This is a statewide project to centralize survey, observation, and other information for all AIS species in SQL Server databases at the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP). The intended outcome is that this will support state and regional AIS priorities by providing education and outreach via the Montana Field Guide, Species Snapshot, and Map Viewer web sites that will expand AIS awareness, help prevent introduction of AIS, and enhance the chances of early detection to support rapid response efforts across Montana. Existing and new information needs to be added to the MTNHP system for AIS in order to keep information current and comprehensive.

Resource managers with the BLM, USFS, NRCS, DNRC, FWP, tribal nations, and County Weed Coordinators all use Environmental Summary Reports that contain information on AIS, native species, land cover, wetland and riparian mapping, and land stewardship when creating natural resource management plans, when completing Montana and National Environmental Policy Act processes and when weighing environmental permit applications. This comprehensive source of information helps resource managers evaluate the likely impacts of proposed projects on individual species and biological communities, including the potential effects on native species from control efforts on non-native species. During trainings to resource managers and weed coordinators in the last few years, there has been unanimous support for information on AIS and other non-native species to be managed and made available in concert with native species and habitat information.

The intended outcomes of this project are that education and outreach, early detection, and prevention efforts will be supported and enhanced by providing all Montana's, and especially natural resource managers, ready access to current and comprehensive data on AIS via the Montana Field Guide, Species Snapshot, and Map Viewer websites.

There are two major goals for this proposal to achieve these outcomes: (1) Centralize AIS observation, survey, and other information from agency, tribal, local, and private data contributors into the Montana Natural Heritage Program's SQL Server data system and exchange it with other regional and national databases (e.g., FWP Mapper, EDDMaps West, and U.S.G.S. Nonindigenous Species database). (2) Develop and update value-added data products such as range maps, predicted invasion risk models, and Montana Field Guide species accounts and make the

information readily available on the Montana Field Guide, Species Snapshot, Map Viewer and rapid response tools as needed.

DNRC will approve the grant to provide funding for the AIS Data Centralization and Exchange to Support Educational Outreach, Early Detection, Prevention, and Planning and Permitting Processes Project.

DNRC is not required to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for actions that qualify for a CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (ARM 36.17.614) or justified by a PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW; or are ACTIONS OF A SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523(5)); or are EMERGENCIES (ARM 36.2.539). These actions are subject to review for EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES that would require an EA or an EIS.

ACTIONS OF SPECIAL NATURE (ARM 36.2.523)

☒ Administrative actions: routine, clerical or similar functions of a department, including but not limited to administrative procurement, contracts for consulting services, and personnel actions.

☐ Minor repairs, operations, or maintenance of existing equipment or facilities.

☐ Investigation and enforcement: data collection, inspection of facilities or enforcement of environmental standards.

☐ Ministerial actions: actions in which the agency exercises no discretion, but rather acts upon a given state of facts in a prescribed manner.

☐ Actions that are primarily social or economic in nature and that do not otherwise affect the human environment.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION/PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

☐ Categorical Exclusion (CE) refers to a type of action which does not individually, collectively, or cumulatively require an EA or EIS, as determined by rulemaking or programmatic review adopted by the agency, unless extraordinary circumstances, as defined by rulemaking or programmatic review, occur. This project qualifies under ARM 36.17.614 CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS.

☐ Programmatic review means an analysis (EIS or EA) of the impacts on the quality of the human environment of related actions, programs, or policies. DNRC – CARDD does not have any programmatic reviews completed at the time of this template.

The project listed above meets the definition of Actions of a Special Nature, Categorical Exclusion or Programmatic Review including specified conditions and Extraordinary Circumstances.

Prepared By:	<div> <div>Name:</div> <div>Emily Moran, MISC</div> </div> <div> <div>Title:</div> <div>Administrative Assistant.</div> </div> <div> <div>Email:</div> <div>Emoran@mt.gov</div> </div> <div> <div>Date:</div> <div>2/7/2022</div> </div>
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Approved By:	Name: Mark Bostrom
	Title: CARD Division Administrator
Signature:	<div>DocuSigned by: <i>Mark W Bostrom</i> BF7A1C50B2AF4DE...</div> <div>Date: 2/11/2022 8:44:18 AM MST</div>

